



Miami Art Museum

**For Immediate Release:**

January 19, 2006

Media Contact:

Gabriel Riera 305.375.1706

[griera@miamidade.gov](mailto:griera@miamidade.gov)

Mitchell Snow 305.375.1705

[snowmit@miamidade.gov](mailto:snowmit@miamidade.gov)

**MIAMI ART MUSEUM ORGANIZES MAJOR TOURING EXHIBITION**

**VIK MUNIZ: REFLEX  
February 10 – May 28, 2006**

Beginning February 10, Miami Art Museum, provides visitors with a wide-ranging overview of the amazing dirt-to-diamonds artistic career of artist Vik Muniz. The exhibition will include more than 100 works and is curated by MAM Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator Peter Boswell. Following its Miami premiere, *Vik Muniz: Reflex* will tour to four venues in North America.

For more than a decade, Brazilian born Vik Muniz has been dazzling audiences worldwide with his photographs of images created from an astonishing variety of materials such as dirt, diamonds, sugar, wire, string, chocolate syrup, peanut butter, dust, ketchup, the circular paper remnants made by hole punches, junk, and pigment. The images Muniz creates are often familiar, remembered from the news, history, or the media. After an initial moment of recognition, it quickly becomes clear that these images are not what they first seemed. It's an approach to art that Muniz calls "the worst possible illusion."

Muniz' illusions have earned him critical acclaim and widespread recognition. Time Magazine named him one of its leaders of the new millennium and the New York Times has

recommended his work as a sure-fire antidepressant, describing it as “an idea wrapped in surprise and laughter.”

Imbedded in the accessible fun of Muniz' images, is a reconsideration and insightful subversion of artistic tradition and the meaning of images. “I have always taken humor very seriously,” Muniz says. “Humor and visual gimmicks operate at the most basic level of art appreciation. They create physical and perceptual responses that hold the viewer in front of the work a bit longer than usual. Once you achieve this tenacity, you can afford to be deep and erudite.”

While at first his works can be seen as witty visual double-entendres, they pose complex questions about how visual information is developed, presented and interpreted. In the process, Muniz continually shifts between roles as painter, sculptor, draftsman, photographer, conceptualist, prankster and critic.

This MAM-organized exhibition includes more than 100 works produced from 1988 to the present and includes images from all his major series, such as *The Best of Life*, *The Sugar Children*, *Pictures of Thread*, *Pictures of Chocolate*, *Monads*, *Pictures of Magazines*, and *Pictures of Junk*. This will be the first MAM-organized touring exhibition since *Triumph of the Spirit: Carlos Alfonso*, in 1997. After its premiere in Miami, *Vik Muniz: Reflex* will travel to the Contemporary Art Museum, University of South Florida, Tampa; the Seattle Art Museum; the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; and the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal, Canada. Organizing touring exhibitions furthers MAM's initiative to establish itself as one of the foremost institutions of modern and contemporary art in America. The museum is moving forward with its expansion and a new building under the leadership of newly appointed director Terence Riley who will take the helm at MAM in March.

*Cloud Cloud*

The exhibition will be extended beyond the museum's walls with the latest installment of the celebrated Muniz series *Cloud Cloud*. Using the sky as his canvas and a skywriting plane as his tool, Muniz will create a line drawing of a cloud in the sky above Miami on consecutive days from February 9 to February 12. By drawing an image of a cloud in a place where we would expect to see a real cloud, Muniz underscores the difference between an object and the image of an object. The project also allows the public to witness a drawing-in-the-making as the plane creates elegant arcs across the sky. Muniz did a similar project to great acclaim above Manhattan in 2001 for the public art organization Creative Time. The project will be photographed by Muniz and the photograph will be added to the touring exhibition. MAM is collaborating with the artist and with the renowned Graphicstudio workshop at the University of South Florida to create a special limited edition print portfolio of the *Cloud Cloud* project. In Miami, *Cloud Cloud* is curated by MAM Assistant Director for Special Projects/Curator Lorie Mertes. The skywriting for *Cloud Cloud* is made possible in part, with assistance from AVIAD.

*Vik Muniz: Reflex* is organized by Miami Art Museum and curated by MAM Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator Peter Boswell. The exhibition is supported by MAM's Annual Exhibition Fund. Additional support provided by Duggal Visual Solutions.

### About the Exhibition:

MAM's exhibition includes approximately 100 works produced from 1988 to the present. It will include images from all his major series, including:

- *The Best of Life* – Well-known images from the mass media—such as John Kennedy, Jr. saluting at his father's funeral— drawn from memory and then photographed and reprinted using a dot-matrix process to resemble their printed sources.
- *Equivalents* – Cloud formations created in cotton, inspired by Alfred Stieglitz' famous cloud studies;
- *Pictures of Thread* – Landscapes by Corot, Constable, Ruisdael and others created in thousands of feet of thread;

- ***The Sugar Children*** – Portraits of children of Caribbean sugar cane workers drawn in sugar;
- ***Pictures of Chocolate*** – Well known images, such as Hans Namuth's celebrated portrait of Jackson Pollock working on one of his drip paintings and Theodore Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa*, recreated in chocolate syrup;
- ***Pictures of Earthworks*** - Large-scale and tabletop-sized earthworks photographed in a manner that renders their scale undefinable.
- ***Pictures of Color*** – Arrangements of paint-store color chips that create pointillist renderings of images from art history;
- ***Pictures of Magazines*** – Millions of circular pieces of paper punched from mass media publications to create portraits of acquaintances and famous artworks;
- ***Monads*** – Well-known photographs, many of them relating to children, created entirely from plastic toy figures of people and animals;
- ***Pictures of Diamonds*** – Portraits of Hollywood's "golden age" stars, such as Marlene Dietrich, in glittering jewels;
- ***Pictures of Junk*** – Caches of derelict materials rearranged on enormous scales to reproduce paintings by artists such as Caravaggio and Goya.
- ***Pictures of Pigment*** – Masterpieces by Monet and Gauguin recreated in bright powdered pigments and enlarged to enormous scale.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Vik Muniz was born in São Paulo, Brazil in 1961. He attended art classes in high school but never went to college. Instead he began his career in advertising, an experience that galvanized his interest in the persuasive power images and their susceptibility to manipulation. In 1984 he moved to the United States, settling in New York in 1986. His early artworks were *trompe l'oeil* sculptures—such as a deflated soccer ball meticulously cast in bronze and painted to resemble the real thing, or combinations of photographs and three-dimensional objects that blurred the distinction between object and image. In 1988, after losing his copy of the illustrated book *The Best of Life*, he began recreating his favorite images in the book in drawings that he then photographed. The questions these works raised about the nature of seeing and the role of photography led him to focus for the remainder of his career on what has been termed "the art of illusion." He has worked in

photography ever since, creating an astonishingly varied body of work that consistently probes the nature of visual representation.

Muniz has exhibited internationally since 1989. He has had one-person exhibitions at the International Center of Photography in New York (1998, traveled); the Museu de Arte Moderna in São Paulo and Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro (2001); the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (2001); the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona (2002); the Menil Collection in Houston (2002); the Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporanea in Santiago de Compostela, Spain (2003); the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, in Rome (2003); the Fundación Telefonica in Madrid (2004) and the Irish Museum of Contemporary Art in Dublin (2004). He was the Brazilian representative at the 49<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennial (2001) and created a commissioned work for the exterior of the Brooklyn Academy of Music in Brooklyn, NY (2003). He has been included in group exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Art (1995); The Art Institute of Chicago (1996); the XXIV International Biennial of São Paulo (1998); The Museum of Modern Art in New York (1999); the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial (2000); the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2002); and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2003). MAM's exhibition will be the first traveling exhibition of his work in the United States since his 1998 survey at the International Center of Photography in New York.

## PUBLICATION

MAM has partnered with the Aperture Foundation to distribute a 204-page book, *Reflex: A Vik Muniz Primer*, which serves as the exhibition publication. *Reflex: A Vik Muniz Primer* features entirely new writings by the artist that recount his development as an artist and reveal the multiple inspirations behind his successive series. Illustrated by his own works as well as the work of other artists and photographers, the book is a remarkable investigation into the interlinked practices of seeing, representing, and creating, dealing with everything from perception theory to printing processes.

## ABOUT THE CURATORS

### Peter Boswell, Curator for *Vik Muniz: Reflex*

Peter Boswell has been Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator at the Miami Art Museum since September 1999. He is responsible for oversight of all activities of the curatorial and education departments at the museum, including exhibitions and public programs. Exhibitions he has curated at MAM include *Miami Currents: Linking Collection and Community* (with Lorie Mertes and Cheryl Hartup) (2002); *New Work: Donald Lipski* (2002); *New Work: Teresita Fernández* (2002); *New Work: Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt* (2003); *Between Art and Life: From Joseph Cornell to Gabriel Orozco* (2004); *Robert Rauschenberg* (2005); *Wangechi Mutu* (2005); and *Mapping Space: Selections from the Collection*. Prior to joining MAM, Mr. Boswell served for three years as Heiskell

Arts Director at the American Academy in Rome and for 10 years on the curatorial staff of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Mr. Boswell has a BA with a major in Art History from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MA in Art History from Stanford University.

**Lorie Mertes, Curator for *Cloud, Cloud***

Lorie Mertes was promoted to Assistant Director for Special Projects/Curator at the Miami Art Museum, in 2004. She has been with MAM as a curator since 1994. Mertes has served as the curator of 15 exhibitions including *marking time: moving images*, and solo exhibitions by Russell Crotty, Jim Hodges, Liisa Roberts, and the first museum exhibition in the U.S. of collaborative work by Janine Antoni and Paul Ramírez Jonas. She currently serves as the editor of *Converge*, MAM's publication series documenting *New Work* exhibitions and has participated in the implementation of several education and audience development initiatives including Visitors Gallery, JAM at MAM and the museum's website. Mertes, a Florida native, graduated from the University of Florida with a BA in art history.

**EXHIBITION TOUR:**

February 10 - May 28, 2006  
Miami Art Museum

June 23 – October 8, 2006  
Contemporary Art Museum, University of South Florida

November 10, 2006 - Jan. 14, 2007  
Seattle Art Museum

June 1 - September 9, 2007  
Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego

Oct. 5, 2007 – January 6, 2008  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

# # #

## Vik Muniz: What the Critics Are Saying

"Vik Muniz is an illusionist. Better yet, he is a picture tease."

– *Weather*, July/August 2001

"His sly, prankish attitude belies a fanatical devotion to art that is rarely given to anyone but visionaries. ... Muniz is chasing down an elusive essence of art..."

– *Art on Paper*, September –October 1999

"A rare conceptual artist who can also satisfy the old-fashioned yearning for skilled craftsmanship."

– *Time Magazine: Leaders of the New Millennium*, May 1999 Special Issue

"We see it's a trick, and we want to know how he did it; these odd techniques inspire a curiosity rarely felt by contemporary art fans."

– *Artforum*, December 1998

"We do laugh at the artist's sheer nerve and wit. We do appreciate the skill necessary to pull this off (or pile it on). And we do look at the images, and the concept of representation, in a new way."

– *The Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 1998

"His ... art will make you smile faster than you can say 'cheese.' ... an idea wrapped up in surprise and laughter. You might just give up Prozac for the day and see this show instead."

– *The New York Times*, September 25, 1998

"Vik Muniz, the accessible conceptualist, unpedantic pedagogue, writer and curator; lately called a magician, trickster and shaman. Photographer, sculptor, draftsman: artist. ... If you think conceptual art is boring and dry, run, don't walk to see..."

– *Review: The Critical State of Visual Art in New York*, October 15, 1998

## Vik Muniz on Vik Muniz

"I want to make the worst possible illusion that will still fool the eyes of the average person."

– *Natura Pictrix: Interviews and Essays on Photography*

"I'm 37 now, and I'm finally making art that my mother likes. I don't know if this is good or bad."

– *The Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 1998

"I've never had the problem – or the pleasure – of being taken too seriously."

– *Art on Paper*, September –October 1999

"Art for me is not about saying things. It is about discovering ways to say them. ... For me, an interesting work of art has to have this quality that when you look at it for the first time, you wonder how it was done."

– *The New York Times Magazine*, February 11, 2001

Media Contact:

Gabriel Riera

305-375-1706

[griera@miamidade.gov](mailto:griera@miamidade.gov)

Accredited by the American Association of Art Museums, Miami Art Museum is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts; with the support of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Board of County Commissioners.

101 West Flagler St.

Miami, FL 33130

305-375-3000

[miamiartmuseum.org](http://miamiartmuseum.org)

Garage Parking

\$5 at 50 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave

between Flagler St and NW 1<sup>st</sup> St